



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

50 MEXICAN NATIONALS INVOLVED IN GANG ACTIVITY PICKED UP BY LOCAL, FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, PROSECUTORS IN PROACTIVE OPERATION

ARRESTS INCLUDE MEMBERS/ASSOCIATES OF SURENOS-13; 18TH STREET; NORTENOS; AND SOUTHSIDE 31ST STREET GANGS IN OGDEN, UTAH COUNTY

SALT LAKE CITY – Foreign nationals in the United States illegally and involved in gang activities in local Utah communities should be on notice: local and federal law enforcement agencies and prosecutors are looking for you. If you are picked up, you will face administrative deportation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at a minimum. On the other end of the spectrum are potential state and federal prosecutions.

The initiative is called Operation Community Shield. Law enforcement authorities describe the effort as an intelligence-driven, proactive partnership between ICE, local law enforcement agencies, and

county and federal prosecutors designed to target documented gang members and associates (foreign national gang members) who are in the country illegally.

Dozens who meet this criteria were picked up as a part of targeted operations in two areas, Utah County and Ogden, over the last few weeks. Initiative partners say Utah County and Ogden are just the first installment of the initiative which they expect to continue in several Utah jurisdictions through the summer and fall. Several agencies participated in the first two operations, including the Ogden Police Department, the Weber County Attorney's Office, the Provo Police Department, the Orem Department of Public Safety, the Springville Police Department, the Utah County Attorney's Office, ICE, and the U.S. Attorney's Office. Several other agencies also contributed to the two operations.

The majority of gang members arrested in Utah County and Ogden have membership or association with Sureños-13. Others arrested in Ogden included 18th Street, Southside 31st Street, and Nortenos gang members. In Utah County, others included Nortenos and 18th Street gang members. Sureños-13, 18th Street and Nortenos are well-known California-based gangs.

"Operation Community Shield is a proactive partnership designed to get gang members and their associates out of our communities. Communities are frustrated with gang crime. This is one tool we can use to target potentially very dangerous gang who do not belong in the United States – let alone Utah communities," U.S. Attorney for Utah Brett L. Tolman said today.

"Street gangs pose a growing public safety threat to communities throughout this area," said Jonathan Lines, assistant special agent in charge for the ICE office of investigations in Salt Lake City. "The violence, sophistication, and scope of these organizations have reached intolerable levels. This operation shows how ICE is working with its law enforcement partners to dismantle these criminal organizations and protect our communities."

In **Ogden**, 24 foreign national gang members were picked up as a part of Operation Community Shield. Nine of the individuals have been referred for federal prosecution. Indictments have been returned charging three,

Jorge Luis Cisneros-Jimenez, DOB 5-10-86; Joel Romero-Sierra, DOB 6-3-81; and Filiberto Medina-Carranza, DOB 5-5-85. The three are charged with re-entering the country following a previous deportation. Charges against the other six are pending.

Cisneros-Jimenez, who was previously deported around Feb. 4, 2008, has a previous felony conviction in state court for possession of a controlled substance. Because of the criminal conviction, federal prosecutors have notified the court they intend to seek a sentencing enhancement of up to 20 years. Romero-Sierra aka Rene Bautista was previously deported about July 17, 2003. He faces up to two years in federal prison. Medina-Carranza, who was deported around Jan. 27, 2005, also faces up to two years in federal prison. He has had an arraignment on the charges and entered a plea of not guilty.

Twelve individuals from Ogden have charges pending in state court. (Some face both federal and state charges.) The state charges include pending warrants and/or new charges that were uncovered as a part of Operation Community Shield. The specific charges include drug distribution, possession of a dangerous weapon, theft, obstruction, forgery, and criminal trespass. Individuals not charged with state or federal crimes or who are not being held on outstanding warrants, will be administratively deported by ICE.

In **Utah County**, 26 foreign national gang members were picked up as a part of Operation Community Shield efforts. Six individuals have been indicted by a federal grand jury for re-entering the country following previous deportations. Oscar Godoy-Fernandez, DOB 2-11-79, was previously deported about Sept. 2, 2002. Because he has a previous felony conviction for theft by receiving stolen property, federal prosecutors have notified the court they will seek a sentencing enhancement of up to 20 years in federal prison. Five other individuals face up to two years in federal prison. They include Jose De Jesus Ramirez-Lopez, DOB 3-26-89, who was previously deported about March 8, 2008; Azkary Garcia-Torres, DOB 3-28-80, previously deported about Sept. 17, 1998; Jesus Romero-Rosales, DOB 11-22-78, who was deported about Dec. 7, 2006; Juan Eduardo Solis, DOB 6-16-87, who was deported about July 28, 2005; and Alejandro Morantes-Martinez, DOB 4-24-67, who was deported about Feb. 8, 2008. Several of the Utah County federal defendants have already been arraigned on the charges and entered pleas of not guilty.

Fourteen individuals face state prosecution in Utah County. Two were picked up in Wasatch County. Charges include drug-related offenses, forgery, assault, and possession of a dangerous weapon, among others. Others are being held on outstanding warrants.

Individuals prosecuted in state court or through the federal system will be deported once their prison sentence is completed. Defendants charged in indictments are presumed innocent unless or until proven guilty in court.

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